



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING




JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

SUBJECT: Update on the Vision and Principles of Universal Education

In October 2005, the State Board of Education (Board) adopted the Vision and Principles of Universal Education as a framework and foundation for policy development by the Board, the Department of Education, and local and intermediate school districts (Attachment A). The background (Attachment B) included the development of an initial report presented to the Board in January 2005. The report was subsequently available to stakeholders for a field review, and resulted in the final document adopted by the Board.

The principles of Universal Education reflect the beliefs that each person deserves and needs a concerned, accepting educational community that values diversity and provides a comprehensive system of individual supports from birth to adulthood. The Board and stakeholder input identified a variety of potential applications of this framework, including:

- Teaching/Teacher Education
 - review teacher training programs, teacher certification processes, and approved professional development opportunities, using the framework to inform, guide, and support teaching practices
- Policy
 - guide development of education law and regulations
 - evaluate educational policy initiatives and decisions at state, regional/ISD, and local levels
 - set standards for quality education throughout the State of Michigan
 - tie education program funding or other financial incentives to compliance with Universal Education vision and principles
- Individual Learning Plans for all students
 - establish individual learning plans for all students
 - guide course and program planning for students

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
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Parents/Family

- empower parents, support more family involvement in education
- enhance diversity in schools
- support more meaningful community involvement
- provide a lens for parents selecting a school or district

Administrative

- help schools develop a local school vision and school culture
- support the school improvement process
- serve as a benchmark for quality education for each and every student

While formal documentation of the application of the vision and principles has not been developed, anecdotal data include the following:

Teacher Education

- The reauthorized Higher Education Act includes references to universal design for learning
- New Michigan standards for teachers address diversity of learners as well as differentiated instruction

Policy

The Michigan Merit Curriculum legislation includes

- consideration of individual student needs through the Personal Curriculum
- a focus on early identification of students not progressing and needing additional supports
- Implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum legislation includes
 - consideration of both academic and career and technical education pathways to achieve Michigan grade level content standards
 - a focus on competencies over time or location of learning

The State Board of Education has adopted several policies that align with the vision and principles of universal education

- schoolwide Positive Behavior Support
- anti-bullying
- supporting Student Behavior: Emergency Use of Seclusion and Restraint

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is incorporated into the Michigan Education Technology Plan and is included in related grant criteria

- the Michigan Integrated Technology Supports (MITS) initiative provides UDL applications and training on a statewide basis

Individual Learning Plans

- The Michigan Merit Curriculum legislation requires an Education Development Plan for each and every student to be developed prior to the transition to high school

Parents/Family

- Family involvement is incorporated in the school improvement framework
- Family involvement is supported through special education statewide initiatives and the impact of family involvement is measured through a statewide survey

Administrative

- The application of these vision and principles at the local level is not documented
- The application at the state level is included above

PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

WHO: The Learning community

Universal Education....

- ❖ Builds a community that values diversity among all stakeholders and students, birth through adulthood.
- ❖ Engages broad-based working partnerships in removing all barriers that interfere, impede and/or prohibit access to the full range of learning opportunities.
- ❖ Recognizes and supports the critical, essential role that families/primary caregivers, in all of their diversity, play in the development and education of their children.
- ❖ Necessitates involvement of a broad-base of stakeholders that influence public policy and practice:

State Board of Education
 Parent/teacher/student groups
 Advocacy groups and organizations
 Educational organizations and associations
 Teacher training and preservice institutions
 Legislature

- Executive branch of government
- Corrections/juvenile justice system
- Human service system
- Business and community organizations
- Other stakeholders

WHAT: The learning environment (culture and resources)... The learning culture...

Universal Education....

- ❖ Creates a safe and acceptable learning environment in partnership with families and community characterized by mutual support, respect, and responsibility.
- ❖ Is guided by a commitment to educational excellence, democracy and social justice (equity) to create a sense of belonging.
- ❖ Honors the rights of all students to learn together.
- ❖ Supports and facilitates learning for all from birth through adulthood, including those who may be disenfranchised or marginalized, inhibiting in some way their achievement of individual education outcomes.

Learning resources...

Universal Education...

- ❖ Assures access to resources and provides support for teachers and students.
- ❖ Provides resources to create flexible instruction and learning environments designed for all learners, building on strengths, needs and interests.
- ❖ Supports policies and practices to prevent learning problems stemming from physical, environmental, social and emotional factors.
- ❖ Promotes leadership among stakeholder groups that guides continuous instructional improvement.

HOW: Adult and student learning...

Universal Education...

- ❖ Ensures effective educator pre-service and on-going professional development.
- ❖ Implements effective instructional practices, which align with individual learning styles, interests, and strengths moving the student from the edge of competence forward.
- ❖ Uses student performance and growth data to design, implement, evaluate, and adjust instruction, school environment and professional development.
- ❖ Ensures that students will be assessed based on growth in addition to broad, standardized tests or benchmarks of achievement.

Background on Vision and Principles for Universal Education

On June 26, 2003, the State Board of Education (Board) directed the Superintendent to prepare a draft position paper, specifically a vision and principles, on universal education. To meet this request, a referent group met over a period of six months, beginning January 2004, to develop the vision and principles. The position paper included:

- A vision statement regarding the education of all students, including diverse learners.
Principles of universal education that support desired outcomes for all students

The charge to the group included aligning the vision and principles with statutory requirements. A matrix that identified related statutory and regulatory requirements was developed.

The referent group included a broad representation of stakeholders reflecting the many diverse populations of learners. The work of the referent group was supported through a structured dialogue process. A core team of Department staff from several offices provided technical support in order to complete the charge from the Board.

The vision and principles can be used as a framework for existing and related policies adopted by the Board, and as a basis to guide future actions and policy decisions to better meet the educational needs of all learners. The vision and principles were created to provide a provocative view of the range of diverse learners and underscore sensitivity to the challenge of effective education for all students. This work was designed to support the Board's strategic goal for helping all children and students achieve.